



How to Run a Successful Membership without Complicated Marketing Tactics



Nigel Moore has grown and runs a subscription website for tech entrepreneurs. And he does it without a lot of complex marketing. Discover how.



Nigel Moore

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 799, and on this special occasion, I've invited Nigel Moore to come and have a chat to us about memberships. Nigel, welcome to the call.

Nigel: Thank you for having me. Episode 799, I should have waited till the next one and been the big 800.

James: You don't want 800. Wait till you see 800. I think 799 is where it's at.

Nigel: Oh, it's a good one, is it? Oh, good. I'm looking forward to it.

James: Yes, 799, it's got a nice ring to it, I think.

Nigel: It does, yeah. It sounds like a price of something, right, 799?

James: So, thanks for joining me. This is sort of an off-the-cuff, chance event. We were both commentating on a Facebook post recently, and I asked you if you'd come along and podcast, and you graciously said yes. We've got a little bit of history. We'll start with our favorite memory.

Squid hats and orangutans

My favorite memory of us is when I took my Squid Lid for a test drive out the front of my place in Manly. Squid Lid is a wetsuit helmet-type hat for very extreme cold conditions. I think we went out in this sort of equivalent of a storm, a blizzard of sorts, we could hardly see each other in the rain, it was thrashing surf.

We both enjoyed that near-death experience and survived it, and I think that bonded our relationship to the next level. What do you think, Nigel?

Nigel: Well, I think you were the epitome of a good-looking man on the beach with that Squid hat thing on.

James: You don't wear it for fashion points. I'll give you that.

Nigel: Absolutely.

James: I've worn it twice, ever, I think. It's one of those things like helmets, you really would only wear it if you just absolutely have to because, you know, surfing is kind of a cool sport, and it takes one level of cool off.

Nigel: But all things considered, I was the one freezing my head off out there, and you were nice and toasty warm. So I think you made a better decision.

James: It's true. The benefits are good. Of course that was some time ago. The world has changed a lot since then. Nonetheless, your hair has become a lion's mane of long, flowing locks of ginger. You and my sister both share the red hair streak. So it always has that sort of cheeky affection when I spot your hair. And you have a bit of fun with being a redhead out there, don't you? You talk about it in your marketing.

Nigel: The ranga. Yeah, we do a little bit. I am the ranga out there. That's my purple cow. I've got a red head.

James: I don't know, can you say ranga in 2020? Or is the cancel culture out in force?

Nigel: Well, I can, because I am one.

James: Right.

Nigel: I reserve the right to be able to do that forever.

James: For our overseas listeners, I think they always find this quite interesting. What does ranga mean?

Nigel: I have no idea, except it's to describe someone with orange or red hair, and that's it.

James: You seriously don't know the origin?

Nigel: There is some sort of origin behind it out there somewhere. I've never tracked it down.

James: I do. It's mind-numbingly simple. Are you ready for it?

Nigel: Yeah.

James: You know how Australians like to shorten things as nicknames?

Nigel: Yes.

James: Orangutan.

Nigel: Is it really? There you go.

James: That's where it comes from.

Nigel: I never knew.

James: There you go. If you call a redhead a ranga, you're just basically saying, "Hey, orangutan."

Nigel: Right. There you go. It's better than the old redheaded rat router that I used to have in primary school.

James: Well, the other one, the confusing Australian version is calling someone blue.

Nigel: Yes. Yeah.

James: Which makes no sense. I don't know the origin of that one.

Nigel: The origin of that one, I believe, is that a lot of redheads have blue eyes, and they used to call them bluey because they have blue eyes, but I didn't get blue eyes. I got bluey from an uncle.

James: This is why I podcast. I learn something every time I podcast.

Nigel: I've learned orangutan, you've learned bluey.

James: That's it.

Nigel: Highly productive.

Parent, surfer, geek and entrepreneur

James: Exchange of value. Now, on a more serious note, you're a parent, you have a multitude of children, you're an amateur surfer like me, you're definitely different in this area. You're a bit of a geek, you have a technical expertise. I'm not a technical person, which is hilarious. I can't even type, but I've managed to cut a living online this way; and you've escaped the typical geekdom prisoner thing of being so good at doing things that you end up doing the things.

And you actually escaped from that and started a real business online where you could transcend getting paid by the hour or getting paid per job, and I definitely want to talk about that. I think it's even the topic of one of your books, or maybe even two of them. You've got a couple of books. You've got *Survive and Thrive*, and you've got *Package, Price, Profit*.

And you've primarily been in the tech market. What does MSP mean, please?

Nigel: An MSP is a Managed Service Provider, and a Managed Service Provider is still a limbo or technical mumbo jumbo for an IT company that helps out small businesses with their technology. So most small businesses between five and say, 150 staff don't have the budget for their own IT department, and so they'll outsource their IT needs to an MSP or a Managed Service Provider.

James: Perfect. And that's been your big game for many years. You basically went from being that tech person helping people to, I think from memory, you sold that business?

Nigel: I did, yeah. I sold that. I had an MSP, or I was running one for another person for probably four or five years back in the 2000s, and I started my own in 2008, and I sold that in 2016, and then started my current business then.

James: And your current business, which is called Tech Tribe, is helping MSPs to basically be really good at their business, and what I teach really, as well, it's like, basically [work less, make more](#). And I can see now you're also into similar sort of dabbling in the same area that I am.

You've got this business called TEETH Capital, and you're getting involved with other businesses and sinking your teeth into it. It sounds a lot like my rev shares.

Nigel: Yes.

James: And that would be exciting for you, when you've mastered the regular business. And your membership, by all accounts, is going particularly well.

From service provider to running a membership site

I'd love to get a little bit of that journey, because if we go way back, I first met you at some of our local meetups, SuperFastBusiness. You're a SuperFastBusiness member, you've done some training from various other people, but in the time from being a technical service provider to now being a successful business owner with a membership site, what did that transition look like from an overview? And then maybe we can dig into some of the areas that might help a listener who's on that journey too.

Nigel: So I had had my MSP for a long time, and I had been in the industry since the late 1990s in the IT space. And I was going along, kind of enjoying some of the journey, kind of not enjoying other parts of the journey, and overcoming challenges, and getting smashed with challenges, and dealing with all sorts of craziness. And one day, one of my friends introduced me to your world.

I just had a look, before we jumped on this podcast, it was June 2013 that I first joined SuperFastBusiness. I think it was called Fast Web Results or something back then.

James: It was FastWebFormula back then, and that replaced SuperFastResults, which you know, unless you are a member of that, that one started in 2009 and went for about four years, then it turned into FastWebFormula, and then it turned into SuperFastBusiness, and there's a story behind that.

Nigel: Right. I was there when that changed, I was there when that changed. And so I came into this whole teaching/coaching world, and my eyes just completely opened like dish plates. And I was in my space, because I've been in it for so long, I wasn't coaching anyone else that was running an MSP, but I was helping friends on the side do different things.

And I got my business around that stage to the point where, I used to work in an 80, 90, 100-odd hours a week and earn 30, 40 grand a year, like most of us do in the early stages in business. And I got it to the point at one stage where I was earning a decent six-figure salary out of it, but only required in it five to 10 to 15 hours per week.

I would do a whole lot more in it because I was working on the business, but it didn't require me in it. And so I started teaching some friends that had similar businesses about some of the things that I was doing. And that kind of sparked my interest in just coaching and mentoring and helping and serving other people, and I realized that I had a bit of a - I loved it as well as I had a little bit of a gift for it.

And so once I saw your world and went holy crap, there's this person here who's gone and built some businesses in the past and is going and helping and teaching back and giving back and built an entire business out of giving back, I'm going to go and watch this stuff, and I'm going to go and mirror and learn what I can about this.

And that kicked off this whole complete - I was reflecting on it yesterday; that kicked off this entire shift in my trajectory in life towards where we are now, where we've got an amazing seven-figure business doing awesome stuff for our clients and growing every day.

And it all comes back to that chance encounter with one of my friends, introducing me across to your world to see that you can go and build a an impactful, giving, fun, leveraged business helping and serving and teaching and coaching other people to literally avoid all the stupid mistakes that I've made over the 15 years beforehand.

James: It is a big part of it, isn't it? It's just spotting someone heading down a trapdoor and just grabbing them by the shirt collar saying, "Hang on a sec. You don't want to do that." I'm really interested in this. This is, I think, the right question for you.

A lifeline in time of pandemic

How much do you think your membership or your business was able to support business owners during a crisis in 2020, during a pandemic, a time when it was probably very hard to do the work for a lot of your clients? What do you think the difference would have been between people who were members of your environment versus who are not?

Nigel: Great question. So obviously, we're in the online space. So we were much less affected than lots of other business models and types out there. And we're also in the IT MSP space, which was also not really affected anywhere near as bad as the other businesses out there.

However, just yesterday, I had a thank you come through from one of our members saying, "Hey, just wanted to say thanks for all that you do in the Tech Tribe. This last year has been horrendous for a lot of us, but just knowing that I had the Tech Tribe as support has been able to help us through."

And to me that comment has been echoed from multiple people over the last couple of months. And they're just, thanks for being there with the support. We've got this amazing community much like SuperFastBusiness where we've got about 1400 paying members in there now that hang out every day and support each other every day.

And there's been lots of threads and conversations going very deep down the mental health rabbit holes and the spaces which get pretty deep in our psyches, and we're just, us providing the space for that and holding the space for that in our industry has been incredibly helpful to everybody that has been struggling and not knowing where to go and just not having friends alongside them and not being able to go out and visit their friends because we're all in lockdown.

And so having this online community where we've all just hung out and helped each other and supported each other and from us, as the business, we've been supporting them as much as we can with better resources and training and teaching to help them know how to come out the other side and what to do to traverse their way through it and whatnot.

So in a self-serving kind of biased way, I think it's been incredibly helpful for our tribe. As much, as I said, our industry hasn't necessarily needed as much support as a lot of other industries out there have that have been horribly shaken by this thing.

James: Yeah, look, I think even before the pandemic, I recognized that memberships provide an antidote to the loneliness of being an entrepreneur. Like, you know, when you discovered me, up until that point, you had built your business the way you knew how with everything you had access to, and when you got access to new ways or new information, you were able to make that transition or the shift.

I think you can relate to this, being able to provide that for lots of people is very satisfying work. And the fact is that, that entrepreneur now doesn't have to try and figure it out themselves. They don't have to wonder. There's very few people they can actually talk to. It's often not their wife, their kids, their parents, their mates at the pub. Certainly, there's not usually that many people around who can truly relate to what they're going through, and I think that's what a membership provides.

That's been one of the core things that I think you and I both offer our communities. I know you're a gifted teacher, and a very animated person and a natural for what you're doing here. And you're also a very good student, you've absorbed the lessons from the people around you who publish material, you implement it, you've grown a tremendous business from it. So congratulations for that.

Critical elements of evolving to success

What do you think some of the critical steps were in that evolution to get to where you're at with 1400 members? You've got the seed of an idea, 'Hey, this is possible.' You started marketing, you've obviously had to deal with all the challenges someone has with a membership, which will usually be a bit of a slow start, a few little wobbles with platforms, balancing churn, making sure people stick around, coming up with new ideas, finding that right mix of value that people are happy to pay, and then attracting new people.

Of any of those, do you want to speak to some of them? Because I think that would be really helpful knowing, you know, how someone has done it. And they've heard me talk about this a lot, but I think it's way better when they hear someone else, especially in your case, because you're not in the online marketing business-y space that we do hear from a lot.

That's why I bring on musicians, and technical people, you know, people from outside the stereotypical industry that we hear about all the time.

Nigel: To get outside our own echo chambers. And I think that's a big part of what, like, one of the key triggers in there for me is just up until that point in my life, I had been in our industry, that MSP industry, and I'd been in my own echo chamber, and the echo chamber of our industry.

And that gave me a very myopic view on business and how to create things and build things and just starting to see your world. And then that opened my eyes up to all other types of worlds out there, kind of gave me different perspectives of how to do things. And that was kind of the impetus to starting; it was just seeing the opportunities out there and the different things.

But then to get started and to actually get to some sort of traction was an incredibly tough but fun journey for me, because I'm a tweaker and an implementer, and I love executing and I love momentum, and I love moving forward, and I love breaking things, because that's where I learn my best lessons.

And for me, I started off with, I think, 200 people on an email list, and I had to go and launch a business to them. And I'd sold my previous business. I was lucky that we had some cash to ride us through a few years, very lucky, because I wouldn't have been able to get the business up and running as easily as I did.

But that meant that I had time to just focus on creating amazing stuff for our tribe and our community. And for the first couple of years, and even now, our big focus is not on marketing. It's not on anything other than just creating the world's most amazing experience for MSPs and the most amazing resources in the world.

And at the moment, in the last eight or nine, probably 12 months now, we've added another 800 or 900 members and it's all from word of mouth. We do very, very little paid marketing. We've got this old retargeting ad that's been running. And that is all from just loving on our members, just getting out there and just creating - whatever pain points they've got, we go and figure out how we can create something to solve that pain point.

And because we've got this incredible community where people are talking all day, every day about all their pain points, we've got this amazing resource of where to go and build stuff. Because they're talking about all these pain points and we go, 'Ah, there's another one we can go and build an awesome resource or training or a template or a new part of the offering that comes in.'

And so, the biggest key for us really has just been focusing on loving our members as much as possible so that they become our raving fans, and I don't know, Walt Disney I think, I can't remember his exact saying, but he said you make something so damned powerful that your people can't help but talk about you, or so damned amazing that your clients can't help but talk about you.

And that to me is a philosophy we've done in this membership and for anybody starting a membership. It's to me, probably the biggest leverage point we've had is creating something so darn valuable to their members, at such a good price, that people can't help but go and talk about us and do our marketing for us out there.

Pricing and subscription website access models

James: How much do you charge? And how do you bill?

Nigel: \$49 per month, monthly, and that's it. No lock-in contracts, no anything. I think we've got some old legacy people on the annual, maybe 20 on annual, but the rest of the 1400 and something are just on a recurring monthly subscription of \$49 USD.

James: And are you always open, or is there any other way you induct people?

Nigel: Yes. So when we first launched back in 2017, the beginning of 2017, with this business, I did the open/closed model. And I felt like I had to give the marketing a little bit of an extra push then, because I had to get us past that first hump of zero to something. And so we did it a couple of times, the old open/closed launch model, and it worked really well. We got our first 200 and something, 300 members in the first six or seven months.

But then we ended up just realizing that for us, that model didn't make sense in the way that we were currently going. And so we just opened it up. And we opened up maybe 15 months ago completely. And now we're getting on average five to 10 new users a day nowadays, just from podcasts and word of mouth referrals and people talking about us in all the free Facebook groups and Reddit groups and whatnot out there and vendors and whatnot.

James: It's such an important lesson, because some gurus suggest you open it like once or twice a year, but it's hard on the people who really need your help right now.



Nigel: Exactly right. And that's my beef with it, is I'm there to serve, not to make a squillion dollars.

James: It's like, I think when people think memberships, a lot of the focus is on how they're going to set up their funnel and their Facebook ads and their marketing techniques and strategies to convince the people to join. I love that you're talking about just looking after the members. You and I are very similar in that way.

We have a low-pressure system that is just built around having a great product. We're always open, and I did monthly for a long, long time. Still, it's a predominant thing. I do have an annual option, but what I've done is have an on-button upsell, which is when they've already committed to one of the two tracks, then when they click on the button, then they can join for a longer period. And that way, I'm sort of reducing decision fatigue.

Now I have two programs. Have you ever tried multiple levels?

How multiple membership levels fare

Nigel: I did. We launched a program called Tribal Masters, which is our higher-level accountability group coaching program, back in April 2018. And we still have three quarters of the members in it. And I haven't let anybody else new into it since then, because I never got it to the point where I could scale it to the point where I wanted to scale it, because we have group coaching calls every week with the guys in there.

And I love giving the more deeper intentional kind of, there's a little bit of one-on-one service in there as well. And I was never able to get that to the point of scaling. So I've never let anybody else in it since April 2018. And it's still going, with still most, probably three quarters of the people still in there. I do need to tweak that in 2021 though, because we've got a waitlist that's longer than my arm of people that want to join it.

And it keeps growing all the time. And we keep referring them off to other vendors in the industry that do some sort of personalized coaching in there. But I do want to figure it out next year, because it is something that we've got a lot of demand for. And I love it. I just, the way I initially launched it wasn't very scalable. Because the main bulk, \$49 membership, has been growing like crazy. We've just been focusing on that. I left that other program running in its current same form since April 2018.

James: Yeah, it is an interesting one. And I've obviously had a lot of time to experiment with this over the last 10 years with the different product brackets, but usually you'll find, if you have a premium product there, it's going to make up a big chunk of your profit, if you can get it scalable. And you can't always get it scalable. Sometimes it just has to be small and more expensive.

And 2020 was the year where I stopped taking [SilverCircle](#) applications for the public and focused more on [revenue shares](#), simply because that business model is working better for the right type of people. And then I beefed up SuperFastBusiness Intensive level. It's more of a premium product, but it does have that weekly group call, for example. So it's a much higher access level for the right type of customer.

The pitfall of perfectionism

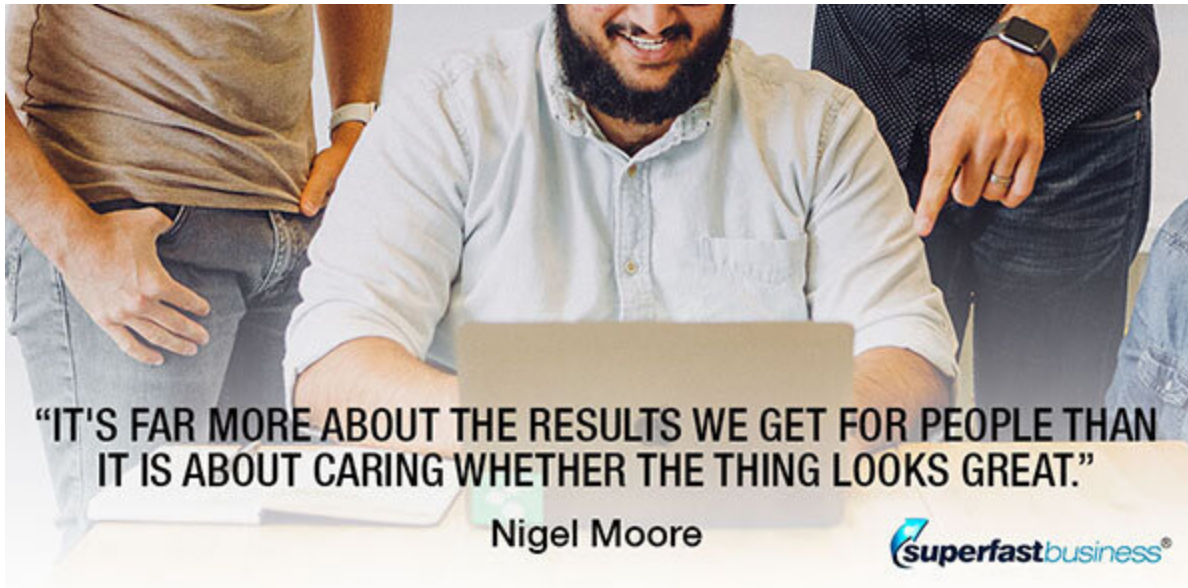
And then of course, there's the standard thing. So I'm sure you'll figure out a way. You like to innovate and tweak. You mentioned before that you do break things. And I think this is also a very important point. Because some of the people who I coach, they like to get their ducks lined up in a row. They like to have everything perfect.

Nigel: That was me.

James: They're quite risk-averse at making a misstep. But I'm pretty certain, and I do say this a lot, whatever you have right now, if you have a membership, is unlikely to be what you have in a year from now or two years from now. They are fluid and dynamic. Have you noticed that your membership culture and offering has changed several times since you've had it?

Nigel: It is not even close to what it was like when I first started the thing, or even close to my dreams or ambitions or anything for it. It's completely evolved into its own thing, and I'm the steward of it at the moment, and my whole goal is just to try and keep up and provide the vision for the future. But absolutely, it's evolved like crazy over time.

And I think it's Reed Hoffman I think, the founder of LinkedIn, that said, if you're not embarrassed when you launch your first version of your product, then you launched too late. And that was always bouncing around in my head when I was trying to get this thing off the ground. I was trying to make it, as you were saying, like, perfect, like absolutely every duck lined up in a row, and every pixel perfect on the screen and spending tens of thousands of dollars on development.



“IT'S FAR MORE ABOUT THE RESULTS WE GET FOR PEOPLE THAN IT IS ABOUT CARING WHETHER THE THING LOOKS GREAT.”

Nigel Moore

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And the longer I go through my journey in business, the more I realized that that is just hogwash. It's far more about the results we get for people than it is about caring whether the thing looks great. However, in saying that, I think there's also a fair degree of, I'm very deep on making sure our branding is spot on with everything that we do.

James: I can tell that. Your brand and design and attention to detail has always been good, and I think that is an edge in a saturated market.

Nigel: It is, yeah. There is a balance to get that in space but a lot of us, me included, we're erred too far on the side of being too detail-oriented versus not, and it becomes an inhibitor to growing and launching and getting the product out there and getting what's most important, is the feedback from your clients around what it should be.

Identifying the challenges you'll solve

When I first started the thing, I had in my mind exactly what I thought it needed to be, because I thought I knew every single thing about the industry and every single thing about every one of my client's pain points. And then they started coming into my world and coming up with all of these different things and alternate things and different challenges, and I'm going, 'Oh well, I thought I knew everything. I thought I knew what I was going to build for them all.'

But ultimately getting them into my world and seeing what their challenges were completely changed that trajectory, and I think that's a very important point to anyone coming into the membership space, is, get people into your world that share some sort of common pain or common thing. Find out what those pains are and then start building. Don't build first. I made that mistake far too many times.

James: I talk about this. I did a course called [Profitable Membership Business](#), and I used the example of a membership I started with zero content. You can do it. I've done it plenty of times. And it's totally possible, because one thing I learned, a big lesson, especially when I did the [Ask method](#) deep dive survey, is a lot of my audience were coming back with team challenges, you know, with hiring and training.

I was a little bit blind to that, because I was so strong in that area that I didn't realize how bad it was for other people until that came back in the survey. We didn't even have a section for team at the time that I did that survey. And now, it's, of course, one of the major parts of my attraction content pieces, and it's a huge part of the solution.

I'm helping people hire now, find them good VAs, and then actually operate those team members properly. And of course, most people, if they're a solopreneur, they're not really a business yet, they're just a job. So they're going to have to get a team to scale. And I think it's interesting that you've also seen that.

Probably the first version of your membership catered for the things that you perceived as the problems for you.

Nigel: Hundred percent.

James: And some of the people came in with problems that were so simple for you that you wouldn't have even seen it as a problem at the time.

Nigel: Exactly right. It was the old expert's dilemma where we don't actually realize that there are these problems out there because solving them comes so natural to us.

When the teacher learns just as much

James: Do you learn a lot from your members?

Nigel: I was just saying this yesterday, or the day before in my community - in the last three years, three and a bit years since we've had it, I have learned 10 times more about the industry than I learned in the 15 to 20 years beforehand, being in the industry. And so I learn every single day in it. And I love that. We've got a group of what we call our tribal elders, which are other people that have sold or are running seven-figure and nearly eight-figure MSPs as well.

And so we've got them inside our community sharing their wisdom, and then we got a bunch of other legendary MSPs in there as well, sharing all their wisdom to help other people. And every time I see all these new little tricks and tactics and strategies and whenever, which is literally nearly every day, you know, I am learning new things. And they're popping up into my world and changing my perspectives on things or giving me different ways that I can help people through things.

So I think I could be in this industry for another 20 years and still be learning every single day of it. There is so much to learn when you're in an industry, it's so deep that you can go, and so many nuances you can find.

James: Well, for me, it seems like we're in a spiderweb and there's people out there everywhere just bringing back messages, you know, it's like a big data collection point. You've basically got all these agents out there in the field, finding out things, and they report back and share the Intel.

The kind of person it takes to run a membership website

And that's one of the great things about community, and probably one of the things that people who just sell courses miss out on that, clearly for you, community is huge. Do you think it takes a certain type of person to facilitate a community? Do you think it's any coincidence that you're also a parent? And have you ever seen any similarities?

Nigel: Yes, and no. I kind of feel like it takes a certain set of values and a certain set of skills to be able to run and grow a community. But I believe that most people can build those skills and create those values in themselves, if they don't have them yet. I'm not saying everybody can, but a lot can, even those that might not think that they can.

For me, if you've got a love of wanting to serve people and you've got some sort of intricate knowledge in something, then absolutely you can cultivate the skills to figure out how to be a leader in that space as well.

Because me, certainly, I grew up as we were talking at the beginning, with red hair and the name of Nigel. So I was the most-bullied kid in school and I had self-esteem through the floor. I had nothing. And there was no way through my teenage years or even early 20s that I ever thought that I would ever be seen as a leader to a group of people or to an industry. And I've had to, over the years, work on that confidence and cultivate it and build it and create this leader that I am now in this position where I do have a responsibility to my industry and to serve and whatnot. And it wasn't always there.

It's not an innate thing that I was born with. It's something in the last 10, 15 years that I've had to create and build. And I think if there's anyone out there thinking, I don't have that or it's not me to go and lead a group of people but you still have that deep desire that you want to go and serve an industry, if you dig a little bit deeper, you might be able to find that there is a way to go and do it. There is a way to get past some of the challenges or mental setbacks or limiting beliefs or whatever it is to get you to get there and do it.

Managing members, and creating tribe culture

James: What about managing the members or the community? You said before, you're a steward. I often think of myself as a facilitator. You can't enforce your own culture, really, like, it's going to take a life of its own. A little bit, you know, like kids. I often talk about a membership is similar to parenting in that it's a little bit challenging in the beginning.

And you have to change a few nappies and feed it a bit, but once it grows up and matures, it can be really joyful and fantastic to have in your life. Have you noticed that sometimes you got to pull in the reins a bit, you know, with the membership, or encourage them if they're not feeling confident enough, like you would with your kids?

Nigel: A lot. So we are very, very intentional on the culture that we build inside our membership. We want it to be a deeply transparent place. And to do that, there's a couple of things. We've got what we call our tribal laws, which is essentially our community guidelines, which guides what can and can't happen in our space.

And they're there, we kind of make a little bit quirky that if someone comes in and goes against the tribal laws, then they get their legs cut off and banished, and it's mainly aimed at vendors that join our industry and want to promote in there and stuff like that, so, members that join our membership.

But that's the guidelines that sit at kind of a tactical level. But beneath all that, we've got this culture layer, which is very intentionally driven by me to be a very open, transparent, vulnerable culture. And so, I often have opened up in there about my challenges with things like mental health and all the different challenges that I've had through my business career and trajectory and growth and setbacks and all this type of stuff.

And the more I open up about that stuff, the more it creates a safe place for the rest of our members to open up about that stuff. And it works incredibly well. Nowadays, we have some, as I was saying before, some really deep conversations around all sorts of challenges. And people know that if they're having a really hard time in their business, they know that they can come to the tribe and go and ask for help, and they're going to get some incredible help from a bunch of other people that have typically been there and done it before.

And that culture to us is huge. It's the very intentional, kind of, whether you call it a framework, or whatever it is, it's this underlying heartbeat of our business and our community is that, that we're vulnerable. That we're there to share, we're there to care, we're there to help each other out in there. And we call it a give-and-receive community, and that we want our tech tribe members to come in and give help to their peers and give help to their fellow tribe folk.

And we also want them to receive help in return and be open to receiving help in return. And we push that as much as we can, we probably can do it even more as we grow. But for us, the way I see it is like, when you know you go to bowling with kids, and you got the 10 pin bowling and you got the two little side barriers that you can bring up so that the ball doesn't fall in the gutter.

The way we see us creating our culture is that we're creating our guidelines or our tribal laws and this kind of intentional transparent culture in there, which is just putting up those guardrails so that our tribe can bowl safely down the barrier and get the ball to the other end. Our whole goal is to build as good of barriers as we possibly can along the side to make them feel safe and supported and helped and have the, as you said before, a group of people around them or colleagues around them that can help them and support them and not feel lonely as they go through this crazy, crazy journey of growing a business.

James: It is tremendously rewarding. We have this section called the public progress journal where any member can journal where other members can see their posts. And that's where they really unpack stuff. And it's great seeing other members chip in. I mean, it's good as a business owner to have the community helping each other.

That takes a little bit of the pressure off having to know everything and be everything to everyone all the time. So you get that, you know, member-generated content, which is kind of like a Holy Grail of a membership. But it also is where I think sometimes I've seen people who want to learn stuff, obsess about one-to-one. They want to receive one-to-one and they place the highest possible value on it. And I think they're really missing out if they're not in part of a group in their industry. Your thoughts?

One-on-one versus group learning

Nigel: Yeah, I completely agree. One-to-one has its place. But one-to-many, I've been in many one-to-many group programs over the years and invested multi six figures into them. And to me, they have been the biggest areas that I have got ROI out of. It's just being in groups, facilitated groups of my peers that are all doing something. And whether they're a small group of six to eight to 10 people, where it's much more intimate and high level, which I've been in many of them, versus the larger groups like yours and mine, where there are multitudes of members, you know, in a smaller setting, I think they both have their place. And even to this day, I am in multiple ones of each different type out there.

The one-to-one, I think for me, if I look back in my journey, the best times I have one-to-one, or I get the most benefit out of one-to-one, is when I've got a very specific need that's got a defined end point to it. And I need to get past that particular need or past that particular challenge. And I work with someone one-to-one to get past that.

But in terms of an ongoing thing, I think I get far more, and our members get far more out of that group program, whether it's, as I said, intimate six, eight, 10 people versus large 500, 1000, 2000, whatever it happens to be, I think they both got a ridiculously awesome place, you know, in a business journey.

James: Nice. So, sort of in summary, it's been really good to get your perspective. I think the whole tone of this episode is really about serving your audience and focusing on having great product and recognizing there will be challenges along the way and that it is a moving target. It doesn't finish how it starts. So just start, if you can.

The things that surprised the most

What do you think surprised you the most about where you're at now in business compared to where you were at at the time you sold your business? What have been the biggest discoveries or aha moments along the way?

Nigel: Good question. I think the biggest discovery for me, like back then, when I first started this business, I thought that we would always be having to work really hard in paid marketing and going very deep to try and build this business. And we got to this certain point, probably when we're about 500 members, when I started seeing the benefits of our members go out and do the referral work out there for us.

And so for me, the biggest insight, I think, in terms of growing our business is that if you can build a product that your members love and go out and do the marketing for you, or actually that probably is the biggest insight, that you can, if you go and build a product like that and build something amazing, your members will go and do the marketing for you and go and do the bulk of the work for you out there, going and sharing the good word.

And that was something I've never anticipated. I always thought that we would have to build a very large, intentional, pricy marketing engine out there to keep this flywheel going. And as I said, probably 18, 24 months ago, I realized we didn't have to. We just needed to love on our members as much as we possibly can.



**“Build something amazing and referrals
can be absolutely phenomenal,
through the roof.”**

- NIGEL MOORE

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Next year, we'll have a whole lot more space to be able to go and do that paid intentional marketing and amplify things and leverage things even more than where we're currently at. But it was an eye opener for me that, build something amazing and referrals can be absolutely phenomenal, through the roof, and might blow your mind, like that blew my mind, as to how far and impactful it can be.

How many people stick around?

James: And I imagine your retention numbers would be extraordinary as well, in a community like that.

Nigel: Yeah, we've hovered typically around three to four percent churn in there, which is, we still got some room to grow in that and to work on. We noticed, the more little bits and pieces we add into there, the lower that goes each time. And we added a marketing pack program last year, and that dropped it down a little bit more as well. And for a monthly membership with no annuals or anything, I think we've got some pretty good numbers out of there of most of the ones that I see.

James: Yeah, look, just putting a soundbite on that for anyone listening, what does that mean? Basically churn, if you had a 10 percent churn, you're out of business, because you'll lose more people in a year than you add. Five percent would be your benchmark that you want to shoot below to have a reasonable business. That's keeping almost half the people each year. And two percent would be, you know, like, really good stuff, where you want to get to to have a phenomenal business.

And then if you can get under that, then you're just nailing it. You're probably not adding many people as well. It's another little secret. How you add people will definitely impact churn. Have you noticed, if you tip a whole bunch of people in, that it can disrupt the current culture and tip a few out the other end? I'd certainly noticed that.

Nigel: When we were smaller, yes, definitely. When we were 300, 400, or 500, when we did the open/closed launches, and 100 came in and you'd see a couple bounce out.

James: Yeah, because it's like, oh, something's changed. Not sure what it is. It's like a door open in a house. It's like, Oh, this draft.

Nigel: Yeah, but I think because we don't have the massive bulks come in anymore, because it's an always open, and we get that residual five to 10, or three to 10 every single day, because weekends, we don't get as much, and I think because it's just a continual building, it's not this big events that cause people to take a look. And again, I think it also comes back to that whole, the community is amazing, and what we've built.

We've got this great community, but also the content, the training and the resources that we're building there is something that people absolutely, desperately want to hang around for. And so that keeps that, even if the community changes a little bit and morphs a little bit away from where they liked it, they still get incredible value, 10 times value compared to what they pay for out of the resources and training as well.

James: And I think a little tip there for someone who's setting up a membership is to build that expectation with your members that there will be some dynamic elements to it, that it will change. Get them used to that change. Again, like parenting, you know, as the world changes, as the kids grow up, there will be change.

You're going to have to get rid of your favorite shoes that you've grown out of and get another pair. Like, if you get them used to this idea that change can be good and that it is partly the secret to staying sharp, is to have these little changes come. And to celebrate when new members come with bringing their new experience and a new opportunity to test out your knowledge and see if you can teach them what you know or if you really do know it yet, because you only know something if you could actually teach someone else that thing.

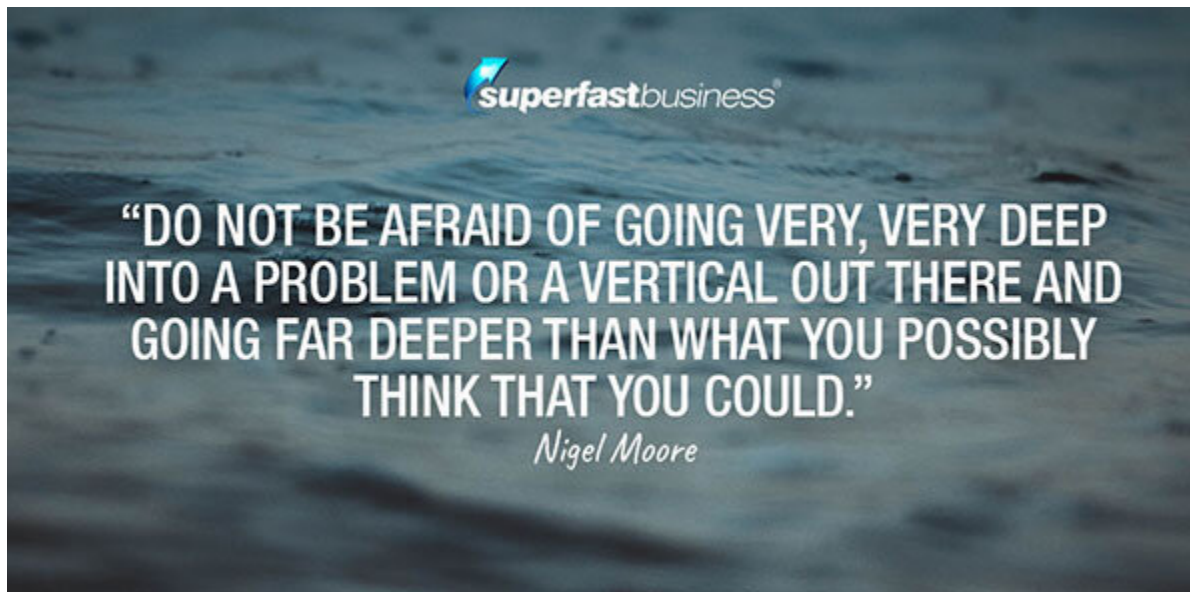
Nigel: Yes, yeah.

James: All right, so just in closing, Nigel, fantastic share. I really appreciate this. And thank you so much for contributing over the years to our own membership. It's great to see you just, absolute top shelf membership for your own industry. And to see that you're actually taking those skills out into the broader market with your new program as well.

What sort of highlights, just a couple of things that someone who's trying to build a membership should keep in mind?

Tips for the would-be subscription based website owner

Nigel: Well, one of the first ones for me is, when I first started, I was trying to do that old problem of going too broad. And I thought, okay, I'm going to go out and start a membership for people that own a technology business. And that could be a software startup, it could be an MSP, it could be a, whatever.



And initially, I was doing that, because I was scared that I wasn't going to be able to get as many MSPs in there, it was a complete fear-based decision. And so for anybody out there getting started, do not be afraid of niching down very deep into a very defined industry or vertical or a very, very defined problem or challenge that a certain set of verticals have.

And for me, the further we've gone in our journey, we're still niching down further and further and further. And when I first started with technology companies and SaaS companies, and all sorts of stuff is what we had in all of our sales pages and everything. Nowadays, we just focus on what we call nimble MSPs, which is IT support companies that have between one and say, 25 to 30 staff, and that's it.

They're doing 150 grand to \$5 million in revenue. We don't do anything outside of that park, because there is so much opportunity, we're not even scratching the surface of the opportunity inside that particular niche now. And so, anyone getting started, do not be afraid of going very, very deep into a problem or a vertical out there and going far deeper than what you possibly think that you could.

Just make sure that they've got a problem that's keeping them up at night, make sure they've got something in there. Just go and find whatever it is that's bouncing around in their head that's driving them mad. Make sure that you can find enough of them and then go as deep as you can into that particular vertical on that problem.

James: Nice. And I imagine you're serving a global market.

Nigel: We are, yeah. Mostly US, Australia, UK and Canada, and then New Zealand probably makes up 95 percent.

James: Sounds very familiar.

Nigel: You would know those numbers. I'm sure they extrapolate across to yours, too.

James: Yeah, they're good for the old export grant too, for any Aussies listening.

Nigel: This is true, yes, exactly.

James: All right. Well, you certainly embraced any hang-ups you might have had with your old name, Nigel. You can find Nigel at nigel.me. You can check him out, let him know you heard him on this podcast, too. If you got some value from this, give us a shout out.

Nigel, thanks so much. Obviously, I'm going to see you around our community and our interactions in the various places where we interact.

Nigel: Thank you, thank you for having me on. Thank you to you for being a part of that changing the trajectory for me as well. As I said at the beginning, I learned a lot from observing the way you've done things. And if I hadn't been exposed to your world, I think my life would have gone on a completely different trajectory, which I suspect would not have been anywhere near as fun as what it is now. Thank you.

James: Well, you know, obviously, you're a keen student, and you're doing amazing stuff. And it's the best thing for me to see people who have been in my world, succeeding. That's my goal. I want people to be better off for having interacted with me. And I appreciate you coming along and sharing. You didn't have to. I don't know how many MSPs we have in our audience, but if we do, they'd be crazy not to be a member of Tech Tribe.

Nigel: Yep, I agree.

James: Yep. There you go. Thanks, Nigel.

Nigel: Thank you.



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